



# **The Connecticut Comprehensive Open Space Plan**

*The “Green Plan”*  
2014-2019

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*Draft Outline  
Information Summary*  
September 2014



Department of  
**ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**



# The Connecticut Comprehensive Open Space Plan

## The “Green Plan” 2014 - 2019

### *Draft Outline Information Summary*



*View from the Soapstone Mountain lookout tower in Shenipsit State Forest, Stafford.*

Available online at:  
[ct.gov/deep/openspace](http://ct.gov/deep/openspace)

The diverse and scenic landscapes one can encounter from one side of Connecticut to another make ours a truly unique state. Opportunities for outdoor recreation and education, farming, habitat for wildlife, and clean water for fish and drinking must be balanced with the needs of a rising population and expanding economy. New challenges have also emerged with storms of growing intensity in that have placed mounting pressure on coastal, inland, and aquatic resources.

Used to proactively guide the acquisition and preservation of our state’s most valued natural and recreational resources, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is currently working to revise

the Statewide Comprehensive Open Space Plan (the “Green Plan”), required by section 23-8 of the general statutes. DEEP would like to share our ideas and seek your input and guidance in revising this important document. Provided here is a basic information sheet to help answer common questions regarding:

- Connecticut’s Open Space Goals
- What is the “Green Plan?”
- The Green Plan Vision and Purpose
- Revising the Green Plan: What’s New?
- The Draft Green Plan Outline
- How Can I Submit Comments or Learn More?

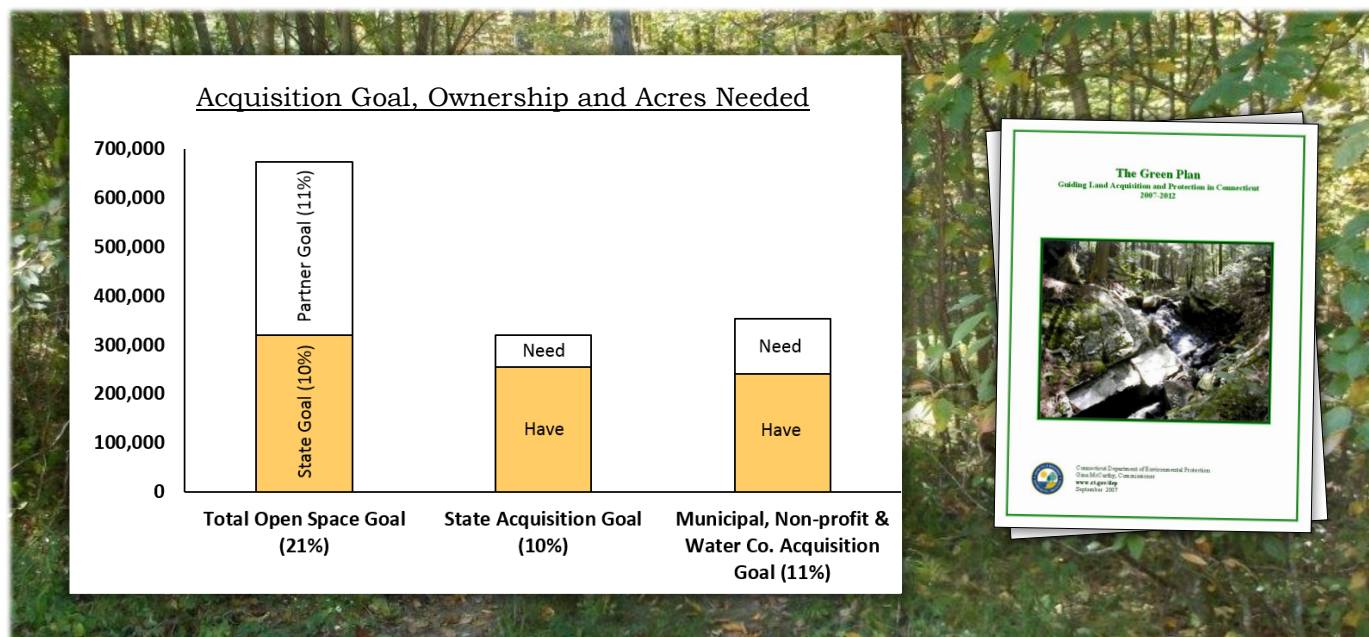
*Cover Image: Scenic overlook of the Housatonic River Valley in Sharon and Cornwall, viewed from the Appalachian Trail’s Pine Knob Loop Trail section in Housatonic Meadows State Park.*

## Connecticut's Open Space Goals

In 1997, the Connecticut General Assembly set an ambitious goal that the state acquire or otherwise protect 21% of Connecticut's land area by 2023 (C.G.S. section 23-8). Connecticut has a total land area of 3,205,760 acres, and to have 21% of the state's land preserved as open space would require 673,210 acres to be acquired. This goal was divided among the State and its land conservation partners where:

- the State shall acquire or protect 10% (320,576 acres) and
- municipalities, non-profit private land conservation organizations, and water companies shall acquire or protect 11% (352,634 acres).

As of December 2013, DEEP currently holds 80% of the 320,576 acres targeted for state open space acquisition, and our partners hold a conservatively estimated 68% of the 352,634 acres targeted for conservation partner open space preservation. This accounts for a total of 496,191 acres held as open space, or close to 15% of Connecticut's land area. Connecticut is 73% of the way toward achieving its open space preservation goal.



## What is the “Green Plan?”

The Green Plan is a statewide open space acquisition and preservation planning document that contains information on: 1) the State's open space goals, 2) land protection efforts in the state to date, 3) threats and challenges to open space preservation, 4) the Natural Heritage and Open Space Acquisition Review Board, 5) open space funding sources and programs, 5) priorities for acquisition and protection, and 6) distinct actions to be taken by DEEP to reach state open space goals.

Connecticut's first Green Plan was prepared in July of 2001 to provide a five-year plan to work towards achieving the State's open space goal. In 2006, the Governor's Executive Order Regarding Responsible Growth required that an update to the Green Plan be developed to continue guiding acquisition efforts from 2007 to 2012. Since it was last revised in 2007, two Public Acts have modified the scope of the Green Plan and require that it be updated every five years (P.A. Nos. [12-152](#) and [14-169](#)).

## The Green Plan Vision and Purpose

The Green Plan envisions a mixed landscape providing outdoor recreation equitably to Connecticut's citizens, protecting water quality and supplies, preserving natural ecosystems and wildlife habitats, ensuring green spaces for city residents, protecting working farmland for agricultural and forest products, and preparing human and natural communities for risk aversion from a changing climate.

The Green Plan describes DEEP's process of property identification and prioritization for preserving the highest-quality remaining open

spaces in Connecticut. The process and priorities should be used by state agency decision-makers and by the public, especially by the State's land conservation partners seeking to apply for state-funded open space grants. The State Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program is competitive, and municipalities, land conservation organizations and water companies with applications that dovetail well with the Green Plan will be more likely to be awarded.



## Revising the Green Plan: What's New?

DEEP is striving to prioritize the Department's actions through 2019 to best achieve the State's changing open space acquisition goals and meet the new component requirements of the Green Plan. As required by Public Act Nos. [12-152](#) and [14-169](#), these new components include: 1) the development of a publicly-accessible geographic information map system and database that constitutes the State's Public Use and Benefit Land Registry, 2) the identification of the State's highest-priority acquisitions, and 3) the protection of State-owned open space.

### *The Public Use and Benefit Land Registry (PUBLR)*

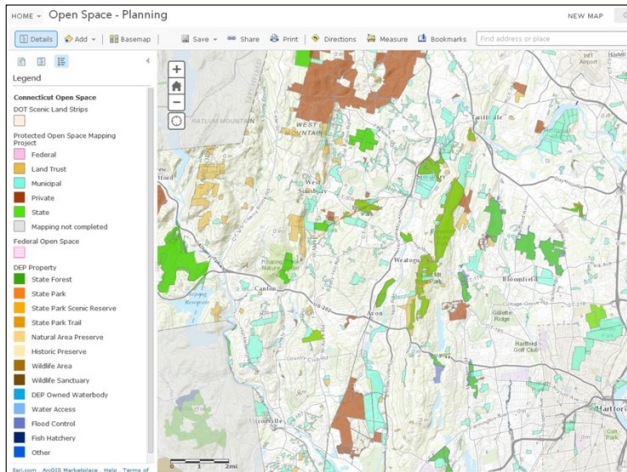
To be a tool used by the public and internally, the Public Use and Benefit Land Registry (PUBLR) will be capable of providing information for lands owned by DEEP, other state agencies, municipalities, land conservation organizations, and state-owned water supply lands. The mapping layer attribute tables will have data that includes purposes of open space, levels of legal protection, right-of-ways, funding sources, and more.

DEEP plans to launch the PUBLR in early 2015 with 3 State Parks: Hammonasset, Bluff Point, and Haystack Mountain State Parks. Additional DEEP lands will be added, starting with the remaining State Parks. The system will then be expanded to lands held by our conservation partners. The creation of the PUBLR, modeled from national protected area databases, should have an immediate impact on protecting State lands, engaging partners in protecting additional lands towards the State open space goals, and providing a more comprehensive and transparent land registry. Additionally, it will serve as a valuable program that will make it easier for DEEP to explain the value of its highly valued properties.



## ***State-owned High-priority Land Acquisitions***

The Green Plan will be the tool that can be used to identify state high-priority land acquisitions. This will be achieved by clarifying state needs for conservation and recreation and by listing specific 5-year priority actions to achieve the state's open space goal.



A new component to the Green Plan and Connecticut open space protection planning, the Public Use and Benefit Registry (PUBLR) will provide DEEP and the public with a GIS tool to identify protected spaces by owner, purpose of acquisition, legal restrictions, and more.

## ***Protecting State-owned Open Space Lands***

By evaluating currently protected open space and determining state-owned lands held by other state agencies, DEEP will have a better understanding of where critical resources exist and can begin to prioritize areas that are in the greatest need for immediate preservation. This includes lands already owned by the State but are not currently dedicated as open space. Each agency taking into consideration current and future needs for such lands, potential mechanisms for permanently protecting state lands will be discussed in the Green Plan's revision.

In addition to the expansion of the Green Plan to include the discussion of these three new components – the PUBLR, identifying state lands of high preservation value, and prioritizing the protection of state lands – the Plan will also take on a larger role in emphasizing the importance of Connecticut's key coastal, aquatic and inland natural communities.



## The Revision Draft Outline

DEEP has provided a draft outline of the 2014-2019 Green Plan at its website ([www.ct.gov/deep/openspace](http://www.ct.gov/deep/openspace)) and seeks input and guidance in its development from state agencies, municipalities, land conservation partners, and other recreation and conservation partners. The revised Green Plan will have five major parts:

1. Background, purpose and intent of the Green Plan and its revision;
2. Overview of Connecticut's natural and recreational resources, and the case for protecting these resources for future generations;
3. State and federal assistance for preserving open space in Connecticut;
4. DEEP's process of identifying lands of high preservation value in Connecticut; and
5. 5-year Work Plan to Achieve the State's Open Space Goals

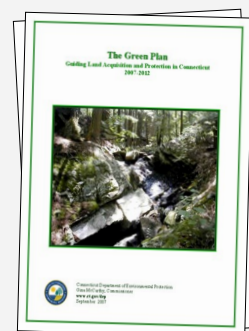
Parts four and five are perhaps the most important because they distinctly provide the methods in which DEEP uses to identify and prioritize lands for acquisition or protection in order to best preserve Connecticut's remaining open spaces. DEEP encourages you to read the outline that accompanies this summary to learn the ideas presented for the Green Plan's update and to provide feedback on this important document.

### How Can I Submit Comments Or Learn More?

Help us improve your plan! DEEP welcomes your questions and feedback on how to enhance and implement the Green Plan.

We encourage you to learn about the State's efforts to protect open space and read the previous version (2007-2012) at [www.ct.gov/deep/openspace](http://www.ct.gov/deep/openspace).

You can e-mail your comments on the Draft Green Plan Outline to Jamie Sydoriak, DEEP Land Acquisition Resource Assistant, at [Jamie.Sydoriak@ct.gov](mailto:Jamie.Sydoriak@ct.gov).



### Stay Involved

For information on public meetings, draft and final versions of the Green Plan, and the Green Plan revision process, visit [www.ct.gov/deep/openspace](http://www.ct.gov/deep/openspace) or contact:

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